Instructor: Lois Martin Bronfman, PhD

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the variety of ways in which films and the cinema inform and shape our understanding of the nature of politics and power. The relationship between politics and film is complex and varied. For many of us the cinema is primarily an art form which touches on politics now and again but whose primary function is entertainment. But others will argue that all film is political in that it reflects or challenges the political values of a society. Moreover, the symbols we see in art do not stand alone but are filtered through our own personal and cultural and political experience. Understanding this relationship is a way of understanding the political nature of all art.

The selection of films is diverse because the perspectives are diverse. For example there are films which are designed to recount a political story with a specific political perspective. Other films illustrate the dynamics of power and authority. Still other films promote a political ideology with overt propaganda while others transmit political values and symbols in more subtle ways. As noted above, even those films which are designed primarily for entertainment reflect political values and political culture.

Throughout the term, our job is to move beyond the confines of our own experience and our own culture (a difficult task) and to allow the different films to educate us. We will not always agree in interpretation but the fun and education is in the exploration. Enjoy!

Objectives

To observe film as a transmitter of political values through analyses of popular films

To explore how power is used in different contexts through viewing of foreign and domestic films

To use film, lecture and readings to gain information on specific political issues and problems